

REMARKS

Claims 6-8 and 11-28 are pending in this application, of which claims 6, 12, 17, 18 and 23 have been amended. No new claims have been added.

The Examiner has maintained from the previous Office Action the 35 U.S.C. §102(e) rejection of claims 6-8, 11, 23 and 27 as anticipated by Tate.

Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Tate fails to show that lengthwise bore formed of interior wall 36 and counter bore 40 extends past shelf 26 such that a through hole extends entirely through a columnar member from a first end to a second end, as shown in FIG. 4 of the instant application.

Accordingly, claims 6 and 23 have been amended to recite this distinction. Thus, the 35 U.S.C. §102(e) rejection should be withdrawn.

Claims 6-8, 12-15, 17-21, 23-26 and 28 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,396,293 to Vinther et al. (hereafter "Vinther et al.".)

Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Vinther et al. discloses an external spring probe having a first section and a second section which extend and compress relative to each other. The first section consists of a tip at one end and a first contact component opposite the tip. A flange extends radially outward between the tip and the first contact component. The second section consists of a tip at one end and a second contact component opposite the tip. The second contact tip is in contact with the first contact tip. A flange extends radially outward between the second section tip and the second contact component. A spring is sandwiched between the two flanges surrounding the two contact components. The first and second contact components remain in contact with each other during compression and extension of the two sections.

Vinther et al., like Tate, fails to disclose that the through hole extends entirely through the columnar member, as recited in the amendments to claims 6 and 23. Claim 18 has also been amended to recite this distinction.

Vinther et al. also fails to disclose a support member having a sliding portion that is slidable in the longitudinal direction while being in contact with an inner surface of the through hole (as recited in claim 17) such that the entire sliding portion has a constant diameter, as in the present invention.

Accordingly, claims 12 and 17 have been amended to recite this distinction.

Thus, the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) rejection should be withdrawn.

Claims 16 and 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Vinther et al. in view of U.S. Patent 7,049,838 to Kagami (hereafter "Kagami").

Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Kagami has been cited for disclosing the columnar member having the end (125) of the through hole with different inner diameters, but like the other cited references, fails to teach, mention or suggest the features recited in the amendments to claims 12 and 18, from which these claims respectively depend.

Thus, the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection should be withdrawn.

In view of the aforementioned amendments and accompanying remarks, claims 6-8 and 11-28, as amended, are in condition for allowance, which action, at an early date, is requested.

The Director is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in the fees filed, asserted to be filed or which should have been filed herewith (or with any paper hereafter filed in this application by this firm) to our Deposit Account No. 04-1105.

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Respectfully submitted,

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